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Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 01657 032026Z

22
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E.O. 11652: N/A
SUBJECT: FIRST STEP TOWARD SINGLE INDIAN NEWS AGENCY ACCOMPLISHED

SUMMARY: SLUG LINES OF THE FOUR INDIAN NEWS AGENCIES WERE REPLACED ON FEB. 1 BY "SAMACHAR." THIS INTERIM STEP, BETWEEN THE FUNCTIONING OF INDEPENDENT SERVICES AND AN EVENTUAL "NATIONAL NEWS SERVICE" REPORTED AS "VOLUNTARY" MERGING. END SUMMARY.

1. ALL FOUR INDIAN NEWS AGENCIES (PRESS TRUST OF INDIA, UNITED NEWS OF INDIA, SAMACHAR BHARATI AND HINDUSTAN SAMACHAR) PUT ON WIRES FOR THEIR SUBSCRIBERS ON JANUARY 30 ANNOUNCEMENT THAT AS OF MIDNIGHT JANUARY 31 ALL NEWS WOULD BE SOURCED TO "SAMACHAR" (HINDI FOR "NEWS") AS NEW NAME FOR UNIFIED INDIAN WIRE SERVICE. (NEW DELHI FM 4, JAN. 30, 1976). "SAMACHAR"SLUG SUBSEQUENTLY APPEARED ON TELEPRINTERS FEB. 1 AND WAS ONLY INDIAN AGENCY ATTRIBUTION USED BY NEWSPAPERS FEBRUARY2.

2. MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING V. C. SHUKLA AFFIRMED IN PARLIAMENT ON FEB. 2 THAT SAMACHAR WAS THE NAME OF THE NEW INDIAN NEWS-GATHERING AND DISSEMINATION AGENCY, FORMED AS A "SOCIETY." HE SAID THAT "THE AIM OF THE NEW SOCIETY, REGISTERED UNDER THE SOCIETY REGISTRATION ACT BY SEVEN PERSONS WHO WERE LEADING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE INDIAN
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 01657 032026Z

PRESS" WAS THE "CREATION OF A STRONG AND WELL-EQUIPPED NEWS

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AGENCY" THAT WOULD "COVER ALL ASPECTS OF THE NATIONAL LIFE
AND PROJECT THESE ADEQUATELY ON THE NATIONAL AND WORLD MEDIA."

3. EXPLAINING THAT INTRODUCTION OF SAMACHAR NAME AND FORMATION
OF THE "SOCIETY" WAS AN INTERIM STEP, SHUKLA SAID "THE
MANAGING BOARDS OF THE FOUR EXISTING AGENCIES HAD ENTERED
INTO AGREEMENTS WITH SAMACHAR UNDER WHICH THEY WOULD, FOR THE
PRESENT, PERFORM ALL FUNCTIONS ON BEHALF OF SAMACHAR, PENDING
FURTHER INTEGRATION." THE PROJECTED SINGLE NATIONAL NEWS
AGENCY, SHUKLA MAINTAINED, "SHOULD BE BROUGHT INTO EXISTENCE
VOLUNTARILY AND SHOULD FUNCTION INDEPENDENTLY."

4. HE OBSERVED THAT THE NEW SINGLE AGENCY WOULD HELP TO CORRECT
THE "UNFAIR AND MOTIVATED CRITICISM (THAT) HAD BEEN HEAPED
UPON INDIA IN THE WORLD PRESS FROM TIME TO TIME."

5. EMBASSY LEARNED FROM A PTI EDITOR THAT A TWELVE-MAN BOARD IS
BEING ESTABLISHED TO RUN THE NEW AGENCY UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP
OF G. KASTURI, PROPRIETOR-EDITOR OF THE MADRAS HINDU. WILFRED
LAZROUS, AN EDITOR OF PTY IS EXPECTED TO BE NAMED GENERAL
MANAGER.

6. SAME SOURCE TELLS US THE NEW AGENCY'S WORKING RELATIONSHIPS
WITH FOREIGN NEWS AGENCIES THAT NOW SELL THEIR PRODUCT TO UNI
OR PTI IS BEING RE-EXAMINED. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE SMALLER
AGENCIES, I.E., GERMAN, ITALIAN, YUGOSLAV, ETC., WILL BE
TERMINATED. UPI'S PRESENT CONTRACT EXPIRES THIS SPRING AND,
WE ARE TOLD BY INDIAN SOURCE, WILL PROBABLY NOT BE RENEWED,
BUT IT IS EXPECTED THAT AP, REUTERS, TASS AND POSSIBLY AFP
MATERIAL WILL BE PICKED UP AND REPLAYED (AFTER EDITING) BY THE
NEW NEWS SERVICE.

7. OUR SOURCE ALSO SAYS VAGUE PLANS EXIST TO GREATLY INCREASE
THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS WORKING FOR THE INDIAN
AGENCY--TO 30 OR 40. IT IS DUBIOUS THIS WILL ACTUALLY HAPPEN.
(PTI NOW HAS ONLY 4 AND UNI NONE)./REPORTERS OF THE OLD AGENCIES
ARE DUBOUS ABOUT THEIR CHANCES FOR FOREIGN ASSIGNMENTS.
COMMENT: IN SPITE OF THE RATIONALE USED TO JUSTIFY THE SINGLDU
NEWS AGENCY--SUCH AS THE SAVINGS BY ELIMINATING DUPLICATION
AND OTHER WASTAGE OF RESOURCES--IT SEEMS OBVIOUS THAT THE
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REAL MOTIVATION FOR AMALGAMATION IS TO GIVE GOI FAR STRONGER
NEWS CONTROL, ESPECIALLY THROUGH POSITIVE GUIDANCE IN
THE SELECTION OF EDITORS AND MANAGERS. CHOICE OF PERSONNEL FOR
AGENCY IS BEING MADE DIRECTLY FROM PM'S HOUSE. CHAIRMAN KASTURI
REPORTEDLY OBJECTED TO CHOICE OF LAZROUS FOR GENERAL MANAGER AND
WAS TOLD DECISION HAD ALREADY BEEN MADE* NEW AGENCY8S FORMATION
ALSO SERVES ANOTHER LOFTY GOI OBJECTIVE, THAT OF PROMOTING
THE CONCEPT OF A "NONALIGHED"NEWS SERVICE, WHICH GOI SPOKESMEN

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HAVE VIGOROUSLY SUPPORTED IN SEVERAL THIRD-WORLD MEETINGS,
ALTHOUGH SENIOR NEWSSERVICE OFFICIALS STRONGLY DOUBT THIS IS
VERY PRACTICAL IDEA.
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